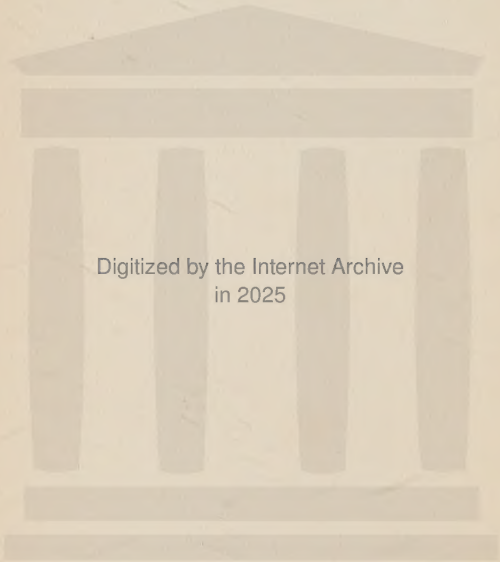
The Making of a Christian

To my good friend
Miss Hanamaker with love
and best wishes,

The Author

Phil.
May 15 1911.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THE MAKING OF A CHRISTIAN

BY

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To my Father and Mother,

Whose beautiful Christian characters have been an inspiration and a joy to me throughout the years, this book is affectionately inscribed by

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE themes of greatest importance in philosophy and religion are comprehended by few, and misunderstood by the masses.

Especially is this true of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. With the exception of a few ministers who have devoted much time to the consideration of the doctrines related to Christian life and development (and these are so extraordinary as to be called "specialists"), the society of Christians is justly liable to the imputation of ignorance

concerning foundation principles. Many ministers confess that they are not gifted in the work of winning men to Christ, ministers learned in the languages and literature and very competent in other things. The man called of God to preach the gospel must be a soul-winner. All other gifts and accomplishments are subsidiary and insignificant in comparison with this one. If only a small percentage of preachers are "wise in winning souls," a much smaller percentage of laymen can claim the distinction.

If the Church's apology for existence be to save the world, surely all of its members should be skilled in

the use of those truths and methods which our Lord has honored through the ages for the extension of His dominion. But as a matter of fact, there are some congregations in which there is not a member to whom the pastor would confidently intrust the unsaved for instruction in the way of life eternal. The author speaks from actual experience, having given a part of his time for a number of years to evangelistic work, where he has had occasion to observe the great need of intelligent Christian workers. The need of the Church is not so much great preachers, according to the common acceptation of the term, not fine organ-

izers, not social prodigies, but willing workers who know God and understand the nature of men.

The subjects discussed in the following chapters are the first truths of the Kingdom of God, the very foundation-stones of Christian character. For a long time the author has felt the need of a clear statement of those things necessary for one to do in order to become a Christian, and has devoutly wished that some one would write a book upon those subjects, thoroughly evangelical, free from sectarian bias, and so clear that "he may run that readeth." No such work has yet appeared, and the subject has so long

burned in his soul that to write will no longer brook delay.

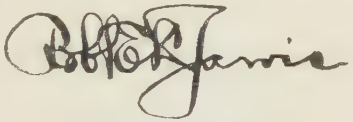
The author has hoped from the beginning to write what might be used as a handbook among Christian workers, and be by them recommended to seekers after religious truth everywhere, as a safe, conservative exposition of the way to God. How well he has succeeded in his purpose must necessarily be left for the public to determine.

What could be of more importance to a wayfarer lost in a wild wood than a guide with sufficient knowledge to lead him back to familiar scenes? Of vastly more importance to the Christian worker is a knowl-

edge of those things necessary to guide lost souls into the road which leads to God, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and whose paths are paths of peace."

The book purports to clear away the underbrush of superstition and false conceptions which have grown about the tree of life, so revealing the bright and shining way that the lost man may rightly direct his own steps to its cooling shade and babbling brooks and healing leaves. Also, to furnish the Christian worker with such arguments as will enable him to disarm the foes of religion and win them to friendship for our great Lord and Master.

And that the book may thus prove helpful to the servants of Christ, and be the means of leading many to the blessed light who have not the advantage of personal counsel and instruction, is the earnest prayer of the author.



Manse First Presbyterian Church,
Clay Center, Kansas.

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

"LET the man who despises religion learn first to know it; let them see it as it is — the inward happy crisis by which human life is transformed, and an issue opened up to it toward the ideal life. All human development springs from it and ends in it. Art, morals, science itself, fade and waste away if this supreme inspiration be wanting to them; the irreligious soul expires as if from want of breath. Man is not; he has to make himself: and in order to do this he has to mount from bondage and darkness of earth to light and liberty. It is by religion that humanity begins in him, and it is by religion that it is established and completed."—*Auguste Sabatier.*

I.

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

In speaking of the development of the chief religions of the world, Prof. Teile in his great book, "The Science of Religion," calls attention to the characteristic thought pervading them:

In the religion of ancient Egypt, for example, "Life in all its fullness" was emphasized. Contrary to the deductions from early discoveries, recent research has revealed sufficient data upon which to base the conclusion that this religion, instead

of despising the present life, cherished it; and all the more so because it was the beginning of an existence to be prolonged beyond the tomb. It was their belief in the immortality of the soul that led them to seek the preservation of the body for "millions of years," and thus they developed the wonderfully successful system of embalming, the secret of which is a lost art to this day.

To Zarathustranism belongs the distinction of giving to the world the conception that "man is a co-worker with God." The life of the pious man is a sacred labor and a struggle against evil, in what we are wont to distinguish as the world of nature

and that of the Spirit; in short, every pious man, according to his several ability, is united with God in the work of destroying the evil and building up the good.

Brahminism stands upon a higher ground, and conceives a universal redemption. It was the first religion to be ambitious of embracing all mankind.

It is to the Greeks that we are indebted for beauty and refinement in religion. They were the first to speak of the Divine and eternally beautiful. Their æsthetic ideas were carried out in art, architecture, and poetry. The personal element prevailed in their religion, and their hu-

manitarian ideas were wondrously beautiful. In the Roman religion, on the other hand, society predominates. The individual was sacrificed to the community. It was this idea that enabled them to found a great empire and give to the world their immortal laws, by which their own nation was governed and which so much influenced succeeding generations. But their leading thoughts were diamonds hid in heaps of rubbish.

It remained for Christianity to gather together these sparkling jewels, and many more — ever invisible to heathen philosophers — and construct a canopy of truth whose brightness should be like the firma-

ment above us. "It is the most many-sided of all religions, and it thus possesses an adaptability, or elasticity as it has been called, which explains its great wealth and variety of forms. In its proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which exists not only in the future but within ourselves, and in its beautiful doctrine, the brotherhood of men, it aims at the closest union of men, whatever be their origin. It is neither opposed to the world, nor is it of the world. It condemns self-abnegation for its own sake; it commends it for a pious object. It has neither optimistic nor pessimistic bias." A perfect religion, it can

neither be added to nor taken from without marring its beauty and completeness. Correctly understood, it is a finished temple of truth, perfect in design and construction, and challenging universal admiration. It is the highest conception of life that the world has ever known or can ever know, with Christ the perfect man for its ideal, and human redemption as its object. A universal religion, it is an unfailing remedy for the disease of sin. Its healing medicines are for the health and happiness of the nations. A physician and a balm, it both discovers the wounds and applies the restorative ointment.

It claims the distinction of being an absolute, final, and sufficient revelation of God's will to man. Not its pageant nor its hoary age, nor yet its elaborate ceremonies, are depended upon to establish its claims, but its recognized powers to restore the soul to a healthy condition, to build up and sustain a splendid social organism, and to lead to universal righteousness. Its credentials are what it has accomplished for individuals and communities and nations. It is of small consequence, therefore, that the kingdom of heaven is a mystery and the doctrines of Christian life insusceptible of mathematical demonstration.

The achievements of Christianity are not hid, even from the misanthrope, to whom they bear incontestable witness. It is Christ's interpretation and enforcement of religious phenomena. Religion, with the life of the King of Glory and the Prince of men, His doctrines both humanitarian and divine, His character replete with Godlike attributes, love, mercy, goodness and truth, injected into it,—the most wonderful and irresistible influence known to man.

It must be admitted that sometimes the supporters of religion and Christianity have stood in the way of progress, but they have been "blind leaders of the blind." But

since scientists and philosophers have also been in the front rank of those who made it their business to persecute the innovator who presumed to take a step forward in civilization, there should be some extenuation for the crimes committed in the name of Christianity.

It should be remembered, however, that superstition, persecution, intolerance, or corruption of any nature has no encouragement in the revelation of the divine in the Scriptures.

On the other hand, Christianity rightly interpreted and interwoven into human lives and institutions has need of no other argument to

commend it to the appreciation of all who love the true and the beautiful.

The Gospel's most eloquent preacher is the Christian life. Unthinking, unbelieving men may rule the element of divinity out of the New Testament and its doctrines, but the divinity of Christian living cannot be logically denied. Not the eloquence of Paul, or Apollos, or Augustine, or Chrysostum, or Swing, or Beecher, has opened the world's eyes to the beauty and power of Christianity, but Christianity itself working out in civilization the powers of its ennobling principles; its reality; its superiority, and its right to live.

Christianity is Christ incarnated in individual lives, and organized into a brotherhood, called in the Gospels, "the Kingdom of Heaven." This society is supposed to exemplify the life and doctrines of its Founder and to enforce His teachings. In truth, it must be admitted that the Christian community has fallen far short of these requirements, and yet there has been sufficient of their realization to impress the world as it has never been impressed from any other source; or from all other sources, for that matter. If Christianity were a creed, claiming supreme authority on that ground, it would have many rivals.

Other religions have creeds, some of them much more elaborate. We have a creed, "a philosophic basis" for our faith, but the influential characteristic of Christianity is not its doctrines but its *life,*— a life, however, that could rest upon no less secure and rational foundation than the incomparable doctrines of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ,— doctrines that are at the foundation of every polished superstructure of character.

Christianity is a *life,* life transparent and radiant with the divine glory in which the world sees Christ. Sometimes sin in the Christian's life overshadows the Christian virtues

and Christ is eclipsed. But even through the clouds, men see the bright jewels of Christian character, shining as the stars in the night. No one has yet denied the completeness of the ideal Christian life. It is confessedly the highest conceivable form of being, transcending by a thousand leagues the character of Greek and Roman divinities, the conceptions of philosophers, and the dreams of poets ancient and modern.

To be a Christian is to imitate Christ, to be like Him. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." Imitating Christ in life, we shall awake in his likeness when

the morning of the new world springs to light. It should not be expected that the child of God shall at once be perfectly like his Master.

Albeit, he should become more and more like Him. A child adopted into a new family, though he strive with all his power, will not be able to walk unerringly in the steps of his foster father. The infant learning to walk must hold to some one's hand, else his tender limbs, unused to bearing the burden of his clumsy little body, will totter, give way, and precipitate him to the ground. The young Christian must hold to his Father's hand if he would successfully walk the rough way of the

world. Even then he will stumble and make many crooked steps, but he shall not fall unless he shall loose his hold upon divine support. His Father will cling to him. "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, 'Fear not; I will help thee.'" Always holding to God's hand, directly he will become strong enough to walk with approximate perfection the way of Christ. His imitation will become perfect, even though his life continues to be imperfect.

The Christian, to command the favor of God and the world's respect, must "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called." He

who can truthfully say, "For me to live is Christ," will have much to do with the shaping of the world's destiny. It is the earnest Christian's one purpose to exalt Christ his Lord and Master, by doing the things which He commands, and His commandments are not grievous.

It is of moment to inquire what are some of the prominent traits making up Christ's character, bright jewels that shall shine in the Christian's life, if he but walk in His steps.

The most noteworthy characteristic of His life is *love*. The Savior of men was clothed with love as with a garment. It illumined His charac-

ter and revealed in Him "the fairest among ten thousand." Love was the sun that poured forth its warm rays upon the stars of sympathy, mercy, kindness, and other bright attributes, radii of His great heart. His was a love unselfish, warm, generous, unbounded. It did not include His friends only; with strong arms and tender it embraced the world. He loved His enemies. Marvel of divine grace! Beautiful love! In Him, "it suffered long and was kind." "It endured" as only love can endure, and men beheld Him with amazement. If unselfish service be the expression of love, His

love was measured by the highest standard.

The Christian's course is plain,—it is a path of love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." The life whose center does not burn and glow with love is not the Christ-like life. But love does not cease to flow when it pours its tides into the church as the river emptying itself into the sea, but its circuit is the world. And as the tides of the ocean flow from shore to shore, so love courses through the sea of humanity to its uttermost limits. "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?"—sinners do the same.

The differentiating point in the Christian's life is, that he can love his enemies and do good to them that despitefully use him.

This love "seeketh not its own but another's wealth." Our Lord "went about doing good." What a busy life was His, leading not to worldly success and fame, but ignominy and a crown of thorns.

After love came *obedience*. How beautifully He lived the doctrine that He came to do the will of Him that sent Him. Following Christ will lead us to the blessed state of perfect obedience. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Think you that it was

easy for Christ to crucify His own will and lay down ambition? I tell you nay. He *learned* obedience by obeying.

The submissive Christian life is worth striving for; it is a field of joy with no thorn to pierce one's feet; a sea of pleasure with no stream of regret coursing into it; sunshine without a shadow. To obey Christ means, sometimes, suffering as the world would have it, but to the Christian it is a crown of rejoicing. In the vision of angels at God's right hand, doubtless, Stephen was insensible to the stones that beat out his life. Polycarp, in the loving embrace of his all-sufficient Lord,

welcomed the flames as a chariot of fire to sweep his redeemed soul into the royal presence above. The happy Christian is the obedient one.

The stream of influence for good is the life, not the profession. What a miserable and unfaithful commentary upon what it means to be a Christian are many Christian lives! The reproaches heaped upon Christ and Christianity have come mostly through the unfaithfulness of professing Christians. Voltaire's attack upon the Christ was on this ground. No one can find aught to object to in the genuine, but the subterfuge subjects our cause to constant attacks.

The real Christian's life calls forth the world's admiration. The end of the conflict will come when the followers of Christ live up to their profession. Under present conditions, much of our time is taken up with apologizing for the failings of those who wear the name of Christ but do not bear the cross. The Christian is "Christ's epistle, known and read of all men."

The world needs the gospel translated into human lives, and its estimate of that gospel and of its Giver is what it thinks of those who represent it. "Ye are the light of the world." "Walk as children of the light." "For this purpose was the

son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Have these works been destroyed in you? If not, upon what ground do you base your Christian hope?

Again, if we would follow Christ we must fill our lives with toil. He is the towering example of industry in all the annals of time. His Father sent Him upon the great mission of recreating the world and reconstructing society. He set about this work very early in life. At twelve years of age He was found in the temple teaching the doctors of the law, and in answer to a question from His mother replied, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's

business?" When He had reached His full development in wisdom and stature, His work broadly speaking was only begun. "He that believeth on me, the work that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." The greater work under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit is to be done by His followers. The field then was white unto the harvest and the laborers were few. The field is larger now than ever before, reaching "from the rivers to the ends of the earth," and still the reapers are few.

We need more laborers, but the greater need is that those who profess to love Christ shall be more in-

dustrious in gathering the precious sheaves. There is a vast amount of work being done by the church, but it is doubtful whether our methods are what they should be. In cities and countries alike the preachers preach reform and the people talk reform, and societies without number have been organized to carry out the Utopian ideas of would-be reformers. And the devil laughs at our bungling efforts.

The first thing necessary is that men's hearts shall be right. We cannot hope to purify the stream until the fountain is cleansed. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Society is foul and loathsome because

men's hearts have not been purified. Christ did not spend His time in discoursing about the condition of society. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the keynote of His ministry.

This, then, is the great work of the Christian Church — to lead men to Christ; and nothing, however good in itself, should be allowed to divert us from this idea. A living, working church, impressed with the tremendous responsibility of its position in relation to redeeming the world, is the great need of our day of grace.

"All whose life has been raised from the region of selfishness and

pride to the higher realm of love and life in God,—who have found in that profound conversion, together with the pardon and oblivion of their past, the gem of a higher life,—of the perfect, and by consequence, eternal life, are the true religious posterity of Christ; they reproduce His spirit, continue His work, and are dependent upon Him, and as like Him religiously as are the descendants of an ancestor whose blood and whose life have not ceased for an instant to flow in their veins."

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

"CHRISTIANITY as Christ taught it is the truest philosophy of life ever spoken. But let us be quite sure when we speak of Christianity that we mean Christ's Christianity. Other versions are either caricatures or exaggerations or misunderstandings, or short-sighted or surface readings. For the most part their attainment is hopeless, and the result wretched. But I care not who the person is, or through what vale of tears he has passed, or is about to pass,— there is a new life for him along this path."— *Henry Drummond.*

II.

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

Christianity is of such consequence to man as to give it first place in importance of consideration. Political, sociological and international questions have mightily engaged the attention of the world's thinkers, and in their adjustment fierce battles have been fought, and the slain have fallen by the thousands, consecrating every land with their patriotic blood.

Likewise, questions in philosophy

and science have had their days, and battles royal have been waged over disputed points while the Christian people trembled in breathless silence, lest the world should be robbed of God,— as if man's unbelief could in any wise shake the foundations of Truth. But it will be conceded that the question which has had first place in the realm of thought, in all times, is that of man's relation to God. It has been the theme alike of prophet and apostle, philosopher, Assyriologist, Egyptologist, philologist, historian, poet, and the rest. It has given impetus to research and investigation, and has been the inspiration of culture.

The mystery of man's relation to the great First Cause, his Creator, has led to earnest investigation as to the claims of revealed religion, with reference to matter and mind, their origin and their destiny, and thus may the deduction of modern science and much of what we know of ancient history be considered as the product of such investigation.

Revelation has come to man in a sealed book. To break the seal and become acquainted with the momentous facts it contains is to unlock the door of universal knowledge, correlated and corroborated by it, and introduce man to himself, a creature endowed with such gifts and graces

as entitle him to the distinction of being called the son of God.

Naturally, when one discovers his true condition, he is appalled at the great distance that intervenes between himself and God, notwithstanding He is not far from every one of us; having been brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. And the Word, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, has become a medium of communication between God and His rebellious subjects.

If anyone should deny to religion the first place in the minds of men, in the past, he will not be so unthoughtful as to deny to Christianity the place of prime importance to-

day. "The light of the world" is shining from the hilltops, and darkness has taken wings. Christ enthroned in literature and reigning in the lives of our chief rulers and first citizens is silently leading in a victorious battle to the conquest of the whole earth. Mahomet went forth to conquer with the sword, and he soon whipped into line a vast army; but there was bloodshed and death and fearful carnage in the wake of his victorious march. A far greater conqueror is He who went forth, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," armed with the burning shafts of love, which wound but never kill.

Silently He battles down the fortifications erected against Him, then with loving hands He "binds up the broken-hearted, proclaims liberty to the captives. He gives unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Thus silently, unostentatiously, did Christ go forth, "conquering and to conquer," and the slain of the Lord no man can number. The influence of His life and ideals is far-reaching. The genial, life-giving rays of His love have smitten the dark monster of Africa, and like a wounded gladiator he writhes and struggles to live, but the death-damp

is upon his brow. China, noted for its conservatism and hoary with superstition, has acknowledged the superiority of our religion by seeking admission to the comity of Christian nations. And there is "no speech nor language," no nation or tribe, but upon which Christianity has made its impress. The curtain of night is lifting, and the light of the greatest life of the ages is sweeping on to bedeck the world with its brilliant hues. Christianity is rapidly becoming the great world-power.

The student of human nature and of history who has fearlessly looked into his own sinful, perverted, will-

ful heart, and become acquainted with the social conditions of the world, will have need of neither preacher nor prophet to convince him that the flood-tide of sin has swept the whole earth, depositing the germs of sin and death in every life. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there are none that doeth good, no, not one." Such is the natural condition of man. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The history of nations is a

terrifying narrative of man's apostasy from God, with tragic stories of sorrow and suffering and war and death. The drama of the prodigal son has been enacted upon the broad stage of life by the millions, and that story has become the most familiar one in literature, because it is true to nature. Unhappily, many who appear in the first scene are lost in the far-away country, and although clothed in the rags of their own unrighteousness and reduced to want and shame, do not appear in the second act, where a loving and forgiving father puts his gracious arms about them and welcomes them back to the old paternal home, whose hos-

pitable doors have never closed against the returning prodigal.

The most rational thing for one to do is to seek the road that leads back to God and forgiveness. To regain the lost estates of friendship and communion with Him, in whose hands is the destiny of the worlds; to enter upon the heritage of the redeemed of earth; to be stimulated with the cheering promises of the sinless home beyond the stars,—this is a purpose and an ambition worthy of the noblest child of man.

This writer holds to the opinion that the great majority of the race are conscious of their lost condition, and fain would find Him after whom

their souls long as a homesick youth would stand again in the shadow of his old home.

Why then do they not return in greater numbers? The lost sheep seldom finds its way back to the fold except upon the bosom of the kindly shepherd. A lost man is well-nigh as helpless. Bewildered and confused, if he undertakes to follow his own judgment he moves in a circle, making no progress in the direction he would go. Unless some one comes to the rescue directly, the lost man will lose hope and die in despair. It was for lost men that Christ the Good Shepherd left the "ninety and nine," that He might

find them and bring them back to the Father. Thank God! "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." He knew that man could not find his way back to God alone, through the wilderness of doubt and over the wreck and ruin of his sinful life. And "of the people, there were none mighty to save." And He knew that no man could "come unto the Father" but by Him; therefore the Son of God spent His precious life seeking men. Just before the time came for Him to enter into His glory, He committed the "word of reconciliation" unto His servants, and said unto them: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to

every creature," "And lo! I am with you alway." *He still seeks.* In the prayers and tears and earnest pleadings of His church, the tender voice of Christ is calling: "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The world is full of "weary and heavy-laden" souls, crushed almost to death beneath the burdens of life, and many of them would be happy to find Him who stoops to take upon Himself the cares of His stricken children. And the Savior is all the while yearning to open His great loving heart and send forth its living stream into thirsty souls whose flowers have withered and whose

fragrance has been lost upon the desert air. Then, does not the real difficulty lie with those under-shepherds whom Christ has constituted "overseers of the flock of God"?

There has been so much disputing about non-essentials, the "how" and the "wherefore," that the one thing needful has been lost to the view. The church has wasted a great deal of energy and lost many opportunities and confused many earnest souls by reason of its unnecessary disputations over questions which can never be settled. The note that should ring loud and clear from every pulpit is *Christ*. "Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sin

of the world." All Christians are agreed that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Christ.

It is one of the greatest misfortunes to which the church has fallen heir, that we are not also agreed as to the condition of pardon and acceptance with God. He would be a great benefactor to the cause of Christianity who could propose a statement of what one must do to be saved which would be satisfactory to the whole church and thus become a universal creed. The world takes no notice of the difference of opinion on other points in theology, but de-

mands and has a right to demand that there shall be no divergent teaching upon this question. Unspeakable harm has resulted to our cause because its representatives are saying: "Lo! here is Christ." "Lo! there is Christ." And the people are waiting until the Church has indisputably located its Lord and taken its own bearings. Suppose some one were lost in a deep forest, and a number of rescuers seeking him should come upon him from different directions. Suppose, further, that each one of the rescuing party would say: "The way to safety is the way by which I came, and if you shall go any other way you shall be

lost. My way is the *only* way." Under such circumstances the lost man would become more confused than ever before, and would be unwilling to intrust himself to any of the guides. Such now seems to be the condition of the Church. The fact is, however, we are at one touching the great fundamentals of religion when we come to a correct understanding of the terminology used. But the world does not look at it from our view-point. So, Christians have gained the unenviable reputation of being divided among themselves. The world does not know whom to follow or where to go, and hence rather than risk a journey full

of uncertainty, men choose to remain in the sinful life.

Preaching our perspective of the great doctrines of Salvation, as though our views were the gospel, has turned men's attention from the great Theme to trifles in comparison. Those desirous of becoming Christians, however, should be willing that any good man who has explored the regions might point him to Christ. And on the other hand, let no man, no church, forbid others to show to the lost the way, lest he be found fighting against God.

There are some precious truths to which the attention of the unsaved should be constantly directed. *The*

first one is God's attitude toward them. It is a relation of deepest solicitude, stirring His great heart with feelings of tenderest sympathy and profoundest love. Some seem to think, and the purport of not a little preaching is, that God is so concerned for the welfare of the saints that he devotes but little thought to sinners, as though Christ's protestation that He "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," and "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," did not stamp such a position as contradictory and false. It was His love for sinful men that gave to the world Jesus Christ. The Savior, God's in-

estimable gift, was His challenge to lost men to return to Him and pour out at His feet love's libation. Truly, "all the day long hath He stretched forth His hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." It is a dire misfortune to be away from God, lost to His love and blind to the beauties of His nature, but how encouraging the thought that He wishes us to return to Him, although diseased, wounded and sinful, and such a welcome as shall cause rejoicing among the angels, awaits us upon our return. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." "He willeth not the death of any, but that all should repent."

Never was there a mother so anxious to embrace her child as God has shown Himself to receive sinners and bestow upon them the kiss of His forgiveness! Dear friend, God wills that you should be saved. He has given you a glorious Substitute to suffer in your stead, and hath sent forth His Spirit into your heart to convict you of your sins and your need of a Savior. And that same blessed influence is leading you to seek the Father's face, resplendent with the light of love. God waits, *waits* for your coming, His loving heart running over with blessings for you. Every word of God lays emphasis upon that *word* without

which the gospel would be a supreme failure — *come.* "He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than an earthly parent is to give good gifts unto his children." If God be willing to receive you, and although you doubt everything besides, do not doubt the truth of this statement, why not now in loving obedience return to Him? *It is for you to decide.* "Whosoever will may come." "Come unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, said the Lord."

The second consideration is Christ's ability to save "All who come unto God by Him." Your friends would do for you all that

Christ offers to do, were they able, but their arms are too short to bring Salvation to you. Christ is not only willing, but "He is able to do exceeding abundantly unto you, above all that *you* can ask or think."

But you have refused to believe He is all-powerful, because the "kingdom of God cometh not with observation," because, forsooth, "man by nature cannot find out God." The objects of faith, if you will stop to think, are as real as the things of sense. When some wise scientist has succeeded in defining ether, time, space, life, understandingly, then you may with some reason reject the gospel of faith because

it cannot be absolutely demonstrated to human reason.

We have indubitable testimony to His power to save. The history of His earthly ministry — a history as well authenticated as that of Julius Cæsar, according to one of the foremost New Testament scholars, Dr. Rene Gregory, of Leipsic University—bears witness to His power not only to heal the sick and raise the dead, but also to transform men's lives. It is a well-known fact that the Fathers also support this contention. Some of them speak of having seen those who had come under His divine power. But more than this, millions of redeemed souls dur-

ing Christian centuries have lived and died in the assurance that Christ had "power on earth to forgive sins." And there are in the world to-day an almost innumerable company testifying to the same effect, and ready to seal the testimony with their blood.

Some one may say, "I have no doubt as to God's willingness that I should be saved, nor of Christ's ability to do His work," but "What must I do to be saved?" That is a momentous question, and God grant that it may quiver on every man's lips who reads these pages, the expression of an earnest soul seeking the Savior. One word will answer

the question: *Surrender.* Surrender to Christ your life, your will, everything. Just as you are, without one plea, with no vain effort to make yourself presentable, with no apology. *Surrender!* "Come out from the world and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you and be a Father to you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." That means a surrender of self, of friends, of the world, everything that touches your life from whatsoever angle.

But what does surrender mean? By that simple act the unsaved acknowledge God's sovereignty and

His right to loyal service from His subjects. It is here that man becomes conscious of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. He sees himself dependent upon God for life and breath and all things, a pensioner upon Him whose bounty he has not acknowledged and whose will he has ever disregarded. Ashamed of his ingratitude, sorrow, like sea-billows, sweeps over his awakened soul, and he cries in despair, "Unclean! unclean!"

This state of "Godly sorrow" leads to repentance unto life, also involved in the fact of surrender. Suppose you have wronged your best friend, by doing things you

knew would displease him and living in such a way as to reflect discredit upon his good name. Some one informs you that your friend is grieved, and you think it all over and feel very sorry for your unwarranted conduct. You go to him and with tender heart and tearful eye make acknowledgments, and promise to be faithful to him in the future. That is repentance. It is repentance in action. And would not anyone forgive under such circumstances?

With even greater assurance may the sinner approach unto God. God hates sin, not sinful men. "Sin only hath separated between me and my people." If sin is forsaken and the

sinner goes to the Father with broken heart and earnest purpose to live a new life, do you not know that he shall be forgiven? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." To those who have expected to be called upon to do "some great thing," the way to God is so simple as to make them skeptical of results.

A willingness to surrender also bespeaks a willingness to obey Christ. To enter into the Kingdom of God is to voluntarily assume its

obligations and become obedient to its laws; and those who would become chief in that kingdom must become "servants of all." Obedience is the first law of the new life, and it must become a fixed principle in the new disciple's heart while yet upon the threshold of the Kingdom of God. But this should present no barrier, and will not to the man who sees a vision of our Lord and King and hears the divine voice. How willingly Paul obeyed when he saw the King in His beauty. Phillips Brooks, the prince of preachers, in speaking of Paul's conversion, says: "Paul recognized the vision. He says he became obedient to it. Dear

friends, that is the truth I want to take to myself and have you take to yourselves. The truth that the government of this world is all by obedience; that it depends upon what a man obeys, what a man is. Personal obedience is the Christian life; personal salvation by One who has done for us that which has not merely won the right to demand of us that we should obey Him, but has also shown us what He has done,—how worthy He is of exacting our obedience. The vision, then, of the Christian life, it seems to me,—that thing upon which the Christian fastens his eye and which he follows, and which leads him on

through all the rich and beautiful ranges of Christian growth, the vision that first moves him,—is Christ his Master, and his own life completely obedient to Christ. We ask ourselves again the question: What is it to be a Christian? How shall I become a Christian? It is simply the new life that comes to a man when he has put himself in personal obedience to the Master; and in obedience to that Master there opens to him all the richness of the new life, and in this obedience man watches the character of Him whom he is obeying."

A brilliant lawyer came to the writer at the close of a service of

unusual power some years ago, and said: "I would give all I possess for the Christian's faith and hope, but it is incomprehensible to me." The story of the man as he told it to me touched my heart. His parents had fed his mind from childhood on infidel literature, and his whole life became saturated with skepticism. But it did not satisfy him, as it does not satisfy the cravings of anyone. With no faith to begin with, he agreed to comply with the conditions of pardon as far as possible, by giving up all sin and doing right to the best of his ability. Well, it was not a week, not a day, until he came to me with

a face glowing as the morning, and said, "The clouds have gone, and I understand it now." He had seen God's face with the eyes of the pure in heart, and had become obedient to the heavenly vision.

Surrender implies faith. A faith that justifies with God, and brings peace. Of course, "He that cometh to God" in confession must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. And thus far faith precedes surrender. But when one has done all, he must believe that God accepts him for His child. God invites you to come to Him. He tells you what coming to Him involves. Now all

this has been complied with. Are you accepted? Faith answers in the affirmative, because God has promised and with joyous heart confession is made unto Salvation.

Do not doubt, do not hesitate, if you have not made peace with God. The Father's hands are stretched out to you, and our Lord has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

WHY BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

"A CHRISTIAN man is higher and deeper and broader than other men are. He is more fully developed in all his capacities, both for joy and sorrow. Christ had in himself all the nobleness of man and all the gentleness of woman. He has vaster capacities of suffering than other men. Stoical indifference to pain is evidence of a coarse nature. To feel, and yet to do and dare, is to be truly noble."—*R. S. McArthur.*

"A CHRISTIAN is the highest style of man."
—*Pope.*

"IT is a very lofty thing to be a Christian, for a Christian is a man who is restoring God's likeness to his character."—*F. W. Robertson.*

III.

WHY BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

God designed happiness for man, and the provisions He has made for him, both temporal and spiritual, are commensurate with his utmost needs. To live in harmony with God's plans is to realize as nearly as possible the ideal life in this world. If we shall believe the Hedonistic philosophy, happiness should be sought as the chief good and for its own sake. Acknowledging the evil of this doctrine, yet it must be admitted that happiness is

a good very much to be desired. The whole world, each individual in his own way, is seeking it. And who would not sell all that he hath to buy that precious commodity, the greatest of all blessings?

We have known enough of happiness to appreciate its value, and we are aware also of the very thing that has robbed us of its companionship. Sin is the thief who has invaded our hearts while we slept, and left us to awake to weep. The consciousness of sin has robbed all of us of much happiness and peace. It has broken heartstrings and filled human lives with discordant music. It has destroyed the rhythm of the Universe.

How many hours and days of darkness and weeping have been yours on account of sin! The heart has ached and wept and bled, as restless days and sleepless nights have come and gone. Have you not at such times longed for the innocent days of childhood? Have you not sighed times without number, "Backward, turn backward, oh! time in your flight, Make me a child again, just for to-night"? Who has not said, "If my life were to be lived over again, it would not be stained and warped and burdened with those sins that have occasioned me so much grief"?

But these awful sins are upon us,

and our souls are like the troubled sea. We cannot cleanse ourselves; we cannot atone for the past. And so there is no happiness for us, unless we shall find it in Christ, who alone "can take away the sin of the world." Can He bring back to one the peace and joy of the gone-by days? Can He bring into my troubled life the calm of heaven? Yea, He can.

Then were this not a good reason why you should at once become a Christian,— if Christ will bring to you what you have lost, filling your life with sunshine and flowers and heavenly symphony? The experience of universal man warrants the

dogmatic assertion that happiness cannot be found but in Christ. Wealth, prestige, learning, social eclat,— these do not bring it. It is the child of God, in whatsoever circumstances, who obeys, trusts and believes, whose life is peaceful and sweet like innocency slumbering in the loving arms of maternity.

But for what other considerations than one's own happiness and peace should one give up all sin and become a child of God?

Because Christianity is designed to destroy all that is bad and to develop every good in man. Can you conceive of anything that could be of such utility and worth to the

world? Can you think of anything that would be of such priceless value to yourself? Who would not rather be free from sin and the susceptibility of yielding to temptations, with noble impulses urging him forward, with courage for every battle and a crown for every victory, than the richest gift within the power of any man to confer?

This is what Christ offers you,— victory over the world, over sin, and over self. This is yours by reason of the new life He gives you. No man can achieve it for himself. It is not in man to change his own heart. Often you will hear some one say with great confidence,— all the more

because he has never tried it,— some one addicted to a sinful habit, "Oh! I could quit it if I would." But does he quit it? Can anyone by his own power have done with sin and array *himself* as a paragon of heavenly virtues? Can the leopard change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin? Then the greatest tragedy of the ages need not to have occurred.

No one can reach his zenith without Christ. The Christ influence brings out the best and the finest points in a life which otherwise must lie undeveloped, unseen. What culture is to the physical and intellectual man, Christ is to the spiritual. The jewels that shine and attract in a

life are set in the spiritual hemisphere, and must be shone upon by that Son whose glory fills the earth and the skies, otherwise their luster will be but dim. We come into this world diamonds in the rough. Not until Christ has found us and broken off the rough corners and polished us into beauty can we shine in the luster of which we are capable. Christianity is the supreme and final test of character. Men discouraged and ruined by sin, and upon whom every means of reform has been tried but to fail, under the influence of Christianity have attained to royal manhood, and lived lives of great usefulness to the world.

In a certain home was a slovenly boy. The good mother exhausted her art in trying to bring that youth to a sense of his sad neglect of himself. It all seemed to no avail. Finally, without any apparent cause, the boy began to comb his hair and brush his clothes. The family was astonished. The boy became the gentleman of the household. The secret of this wonderful change was that the boy had fallen in love. It was the influence of an ideal. Just such a power, only more marvelous, will Christ wield over the life that comes under his personal influence.

Again, sin degrades one in his own estimation and causes him to

forfeit the respect of his friends. Before the world has known of the wrongdoer's progress in evil and has rewarded him with a frown, the wrongdoer himself has felt the shame of sin and has hung his head like the wounded flower on the roadside. No one ever thinks so well of himself after stooping to a sinful act. The progress toward the unhappy state of degradation is rapid, and he who begins the descent ever so slowly will find himself directly beyond hope, with the wings of despair overspreading his future. There is no condition more hopeless than that of the individual who has lost self-respect. And every one

who persists in sin will come to that unhappy sequel. What a sad picture does he present who has lost the sense of shame in evil doing! Have you not oftentimes seen some one in the gutter, indifferent to public opinion, who a few years before would have blushed for a month over such a delinquency? How rapidly sin bears one down to the earth!

As the sinner loses respect for himself, his friends, too, are losing confidence. Life is a torture without friends. Why will one persist in a course of action which will rob him of the dearest boon to mortals given?

A popular man was elected to Congress. He was given an over-

whelming vote. His majority was the largest ever given to any man in the district. For two years he gave himself up to vice, disgracing himself and insulting his constituency. He lost self-respect, his fall was terrible, and the people still mourn for him. It was the wages of sin.

But perhaps the sadder thought is that the sinner degrades himself in the sight of God, "who is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity." If we should be concerned about what men think of us, should we not be much more anxious to have the smile of God's approval, and if we have His approval we shall have universal respect. With the consciousness of

His good pleasure, we may be happy although all our friends forsake us.

Besides all this, sin disqualifies for places of responsibility and leadership. Every community is in need of strong men to lead out in various enterprises, and every community has men who are capable in every way except they stand aloof from Christianity. The church is the recognized channel of usefulness, and he who repudiates the church cuts off the arm of usefulness he would extend to the world.

One of the greatest crimes for which we must account is misdirected influence. "He who is not for me is against me," said Christ. To

disqualify oneself for service to Christ is to qualify oneself for service to the devil. It is painful to me that in every place some of the brightest, broadest and most liberal men stand in the way of religious and moral progress, when as leaders they could mold the sentiment of large circles.

But losing sight of all other reasons, the fact that sin leads men into trouble and difficulty is strong enough argument for giving it up altogether. Christianity is the only safeguard to virtue, honor, and a happy life.

Sin has filled the world with tears and heartaches and death. It has

crowded jails, penitentiaries, and almshouses. It has broken up homes and wrecked mighty nations. It has been the source of all earthly woe. Then why will men be led by the devil captive at his will, when it means loss, ruin, to do it? When one plunges into sin, let him bid farewell to happiness and hope and heaven.

Give it up! Give it up now! Sin only is between you and the secret of a happy life.

Hark! Voices from the past are calling to you. There is the voice of mother-love, full of tears and tenderness. The voices of dear friends long since gone to their reward, re-

minding you of childhood's innocence and sweet dreams. The voice of God calling you to account for promises and vows unkept and for a character torn down by vicious habits; and voices earnest and insistent from out the tomb of buried hopes and joys. All these and others are reminding you of duty and crying in your ears, Do not forget! Do not forget!

"Oh, 'Dinna forget!' How it rings in our ears
A spur to our joys, a font to our tears —
When we meet, when we part, when we frolic or fret,
It never escapes us, this 'Dinna forget!'
The maid to her lover, she whispers it sly,
The mother to daughter, who bids her good-bye;
And all our engagements, until they are met,
Need aye the reminder—now, 'Dinna forget!'

"When to India or China, or some distant land,
The youngster sets off, a toom purse in his hand,
Hoping there some unlooked promotion to get —
Each letter he opens bids 'Dinna forget!'
And when home he returns at affection's command,
And in the auld kirk next his father must stand,
Though his head 's carried high, yet his een they are wet,
For his childhood comes back, saying 'Dinna forget!'

"When the good-wives together sit cracking their jokes,
And clavers gang round 'mong the elderly folk.
Sic a flood of remembrance on byegones they let,
That the warl seems gone backwards in 'Dinna forget!'
The minister preaches aye on the same text,
The doctor's advice drills it into us next;
And all through the week, should we owe a small debt,
There 's a chiel wi' a summons cries, 'Dinna forget!'

"When we 're weel and at work we still hear
the refrain,
When we 're ill and want help, hark! it turns
up again;
Whether sober or blythe, in a rage or a pet,
There 's no getting rid of this 'Dinna forget!'
If it 's gout in the toe, the twinge gets more
keen,
If an error in diet, the cheek looks more lean;
If it 's losses at cards, or some wee foolish bet,
Tenfold it annoys us — this 'Dinna forget!'

"But if it 's a tale of distress that we hear,
Or some spirit that 's broken, we 're bidden to
cheer —
On our errand of mercy from home let us set
As if angels called after us, 'Dinna forget!'
Thus hearing, 'tis pleasant, and on it set store,
For our good worthy forbears oft used it be-
fore:
A kindly word spoken with kindness is met,
And while Scot speaks to Scot 'twill be —
'Dinna forget!'"

THE TIME TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

"THE flowers fade, the heart withers, man grows old and dies, the world lies down in the sepulchre of ages; but time writes no wrinkles on the brow of eternity." — *Bishop Heber.*

"THE awfulness of sin comes not wholly from the fact that it is a disobedience of God, but as well from the certainty that it is a doing of violence to the soul itself, in the loss of power, the decay of love, the enfeebling of will, and the general atrophy of the nature. The thing affected by our indulgence is not alone the book of final judgment, but the present fabric of the spirit."—*Drummond.*

"HOW CAN a man learn to know himself? By observation, never; but by action. Endeavor to do your duty, and you shall know what is in you."— *Goethe.*

IV.

THE TIME TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

If the revelation vouchsafed to us in the Scriptures be true,— and the centuries sufficiently attest that fact to those for whom these pages are especially designed,— it is clearly the duty of all whom God calls by His Spirit into His service, to act upon that call with all haste. Who does not know, by experience as well as from observation, that in religious matters especially, nothing is to be gained by delay? To risk delay in any enterprise is to lose in

most instances. To him who believes in God and the possibility of righting relationship with Him, there is but one thing to do — to seek Him at once, and with the whole heart enter upon service in His kingdom. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The consequences of sin cannot be escaped in this life. That "the wages of sin is death," monuments of wrecked and ruined lives in every community testify. Whatever one may think of the future, and the light the Bible throws upon it, of this the whole world is convinced, that the Scriptures are just in their interpretation of life.

As to whether there is a future state of immortality, there is no reasonable ground for doubt. Man has a religious nature. Is there no God to satisfy it? Romanes said that "the religious instinct points to God as its correlate." Everything in nature points to a correlate. The eye calls for light, and behold! the colors of the rainbow. The ear was made for sound, and lo! all nature is vocal with ravishing music. The earth produces abundantly of food to satisfy man's hunger. Springs break from the mountain-side, and cooling streams flow from ocean to ocean to satisfy man's thirst. Is there something to satisfy every call

of man's nature except his religious instinct? If not, then truly, "man would be out of analogy with all nature."

Granting that there is a correlate to the religious nature, there is every reason to urge one not to neglect the acceptance of offered mercy. It is not necessary for one to be a great sinner to neglect God's Salvation. On the other hand, he may be a very good man socially and morally, whose only fault is a failure to confess before men, Christ as his Savior. And while he neglects he is drifting farther and farther away from God and his inclination to

yield to Christ is becoming less pronounced.

Moreover, if God has a claim upon man, no one has a right to deny Him His own when He calls for it. "Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit, which are His." He who will not heed God's call does it at the peril of his own soul. But considering man's interest with reference to the present only, to obey God is the part of wisdom. To be a Christian is to have a guarantee of the sweetest peace, the highest joy, and the most permanent happiness the world can offer.

Then to have lived in harmony with God's plans is to make the best preparation for the future. It used to be thought among a certain class that religion was designed especially to prepare men to die, but happily we have come to look upon it as a preparation for life. He who lives best will be most ready for the future when the summons comes. It is obvious from the Scriptures that a man's standing in the next world shall be measured by the tenure and character of service he has rendered to his God on earth.

If you will talk to Christian people, they will say to you invariably that their greatest regret is that they

did not begin the life of trust earlier. Then, why will not you, without another moment's delay, surrender to Christ and enter upon His work?

In a congregation of five hundred people during a revival service, a census of the audience was taken to find that only one of the number had decided for Christ after the age of fifty, and only ten after the age of twenty.

You cannot afford to miss the joy of Christian living, nor can you afford to go to judgment without preparation to meet God in peace. So if you would make sure your interest, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." How

much we need Christ in our lives! There are times when adversity sweeps over us. The savings of years of toil are gone in a moment's time; friends prove untrue; and health fails us. What is such a life *alone?* Ah! it would be dreary, miserable and wretched enough. A poor old man whose friends had deserted him, and who was dragging his life out in his gloomy home, without human companionship, was asked by a little girl who visited him, "Are you not quite lonely here?" And he answered, "No, my child; for I am not alone." Alone on an island; in a storm at sea; far away from the fatherland, among

strangers; cast off by one's family; sick, old, helpless, hungry, cold, and ready to die,—in any condition, life is worth living with God's companionship.

Why not seek Christ for your friend? *"Why not now?"* He will be more than all this world to you. He is a great and inspiring Master. There are millions on earth to-day who had lost all hope of ever accomplishing anything, but who became great and successful under the inspiration of the Great Christ. Who has not been astounded beyond measure at the outcome in some one who was a total wreck on the shores of time? If there be help and in-

spiration in Christ's service, man should avail himself of it at the first opportunity.

Who has not felt the need of some great motive, some power to propel and push one forward? A good and noble friend has inspired us with lofty ambitions, and under his wholesome influence we have striven for great things. But friends are inconstant; nor do they furnish the high ideals which are necessary to excite our strongest efforts. The Man of Galilee possesses such qualities and attributes as to at once clothe Him with unparalleled influence. His will has ever been supreme among men, even if His

supremacy has not always been acknowledged. He has not failed of accomplishing His purpose, even when all the forces in the Universe opposed Him. Such a character cannot only lead, but by virtue of its inherent force compels men to follow where He leads.

The ideals of Christ inspire men to do their best in any of life's vocations. Not alone do the apostle and preacher swing out into atmosphere that stirs and thrills, led on by Him whose invisible presence quickens like an electric current, but the carpenter at the bench,the farmer at the plow, the smith at his forge,— these and all other sons of honest toil are

within the charmed circle of His influence, "who filleth all in all." A great general will mold his soldiers into valiant men. The leader sets the pace at which those will walk who follow him. How proud we are of those brave noble men with whom we have had to do, and whose lives have so greatly influenced us! How often we hear some one remark upon the influence some teacher or some associate wielded over him.

The man who swayed the world as no other man has been able to do, and of whose supreme influence you may avail yourself, is the man Christ Jesus.

Remember what wonderful things

the apostles accomplished, led on by His irresistible influence. See what they endured — what dangers and conflicts, what fiery trials. They were not men in the beginning of whom the world would expect much. But they became the central forces in the dawning day of Christian civilization. The genial rays of His presence kissed into activity, force, and beauty, the sleeping germs of power in their lives, which otherwise would have passed like "ships in the night." How brave, noble, purposeful, men have become who have seen the great light.

He was a great man intellectually who saw the heavenly vision and

heard the Christ-voice on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. But the vision of the glorious Prince of Peace so transformed and inspired him, that, as Mark Antony said of Cæsar, He became "the greatest man [influentially] that ever lived in the tide of times," — great in courage, power of endurance without a murmur, in purpose, in thought, whose vision was bounded only by the horizon of human needs, — great in life, beautiful and brave in death. Who in all times has turned his back upon his own race, shut his eyes to every earthly prospect, despised ambition when the world was waiting to shower honors upon him; faced per

secution, stripes, imprisonment, perils without number, and said: "None of these things move me, cause me to diverge from my course," who had not his eyes fixed upon "the bright and morning star." What the influence of Christ did for the apostles and Paul, it did also for the confessors and martyrs who dared to quench fires of persecution and hell let loose upon them by Christ's persecutors.

He will be such an inspiration to you as will cause wounded hope to take wings. He will brush away the clouds and give you a clear vision of life and duty; He will re-baptize you with an holy and determined

purpose,— and you will be able to stand before kings for his sake, for "the joy that is set before you." The most discouraged, sin-cursed soul in the world may assuredly hope to arise and triumph over evil, and build up his broken fortunes under the influence of the great and inspiring life of Christ. To ally oneself with Christ gives one conscious power, and thus is he made courageous for life's duties and trials. Naturally, man is timid and of fearful heart, and without sufficient resources to adjust himself to the various conditions which he is called upon to meet. Life is a struggle uphill. The hill we climb may be pov-

erty, bodily affliction,— tribulations of some other sort, danger. Whatever the course of our life, we need courage for every step. The way is all the time dangerous, dark and uncertain. Anyway, we need to know that we are not traveling alone, suffering without sympathy, battling single-handed. Christ affords one courage for life, whatever it may bring.

Bearing his own burdens with never a whisper of good cheer in the times of gloom and misfortune, the poor, discouraged, bilious pessimist, storm-tossed and frightened by the breakers, real or imaginary, with wanton and cowardly hand takes his

own life and sends his helpless soul rushing down the black stream of death, to be worse tempest-tossed upon the raging sea which knows no calm.

The man of Christ is the man of beautiful, unfailing courage. Whether it be at home, when the wolf of hunger stands in his door; upon the mountain, where temptation shakes the citadel of his manhood as do the winds the sturdy oaks; or upon the battle-field, where questions affecting the peace, prosperity and happiness of his country are to be settled by blood; or in the arena, where men are called upon to test their fidelity to truth, virtue,

honor, with their lives,—the man who has entered into relations with Christ stands undaunted, with eyes of fire, nerves of steel, and the courage of a lion.

Savonarola never had lifted his gleaming sword against the powerful and voluptuous de Medici, the god of Florence, but for the conscious power of the living Christ that thrilled him like an electric battery. Martin Luther never had gone to Rome to defy the pope, paragon of sacrilegious assumptions, defying armies of enemies and challenging devils, but for that undaunted courage which is the heritage of him who

"endures as seeing Him who is invisible."

If Christ infuses such courage, ought we not to seek Him first of all? Otherwise, the storm might come and find us unprepared to resist its giant force, some crucial hour when our strength and courage would fail us, and we go down to rise no more. If we might be permitted to hear the voices of those who have failed because they neglected the day of their opportunity, it would be like the roar of mighty waters. Have you not felt the need of this tonic? Now is the time to yield to Christ, and out of weakness you will be made strong.

Then the Christian life is an enthusiastic life, filling one with a zeal for whatever he does that pushes him right to the front. There is no pabulum like religion, to feed the fires of energy. In this the day of rapid movements, he who succeeds must have the currents of enthusiasm coursing all through him.

Millions, Rip Van Winkle-like, are sleeping while the world moves on apace. The rattle of musketry, the hum of machinery, the sounds of the march of civilization, are powerless to awake them to passing opportunities. Only He who broke the slumbers of Bethany's son can awaken sleeping, dreaming humanity to the

brilliancy and music and charm of the day of Grace.

Have you lost interest in your work, your home, your friends, your country? In Christ you will find a new life in which your soul's possibility will stand out before you in such real and tangible form as to bring to you the snap, spring, vigor, buoyancy, and hope of happy, healthy childhood.

Again, you should decide *now*, because of the great loss of personal joy you are sustaining. No Master so faithfully rewards His servants as does Christ. Every day you will have value received for your investment of labor. He who faithfully

serves Christ will hear the "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," every day, and shall sweetly experience the joy of his Lord. The reward for service is not kept back till the Christian enters upon the happy estates of heaven. So much is given him here that his cup runs over, and he feeds from the table prepared for him in the midst of his enemies. All this you are losing — you are missing the real honey and milk of life.

Would that you might be impressed with the importance of a prompt decision. Do not risk another day.

"Laid on Thy altar, O our Lord divine,
Accept my gift this day, for Jesus' sake!
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make;
But here I bring within my trembling hand
This will of mine — a thing that seemeth small;
And Thou alone, O Lord, canst understand
How, when I yield Thee this, I yield Thee all.

"Hidden therein, Thy gracious gaze can see
Struggles of passion, visions of delight —
All that I have, or am, or fain would be —
Deep love, fond hope, and longing infinite.
It hath been wet with tears, and dimmed with sighs,
Clenched in my grasp till beauty it hath none;
Now, from Thy footstool where it vanquished lies,
The prayer ascendeth, May Thy will be done.

"Take it, O Father, ere my courage fail,
And merge it so in Thy own will, that e'en
If in some desperate hour my cries prevail,
And thou give back my gift, it may have been
So changed and purified, so fair have grown,
So one with Thee, so filled with peace divine,
I may not know or feel it as my own,—
But gaining back my will, may find it Thine."

OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY IRRATIONAL.

"Religion from its very nature must work its way forward only by love. Its power lies not in legislatures, but in persuasion; and the more gently the Bible comes to people's homes and to the children, the more divine will the book appear."—*Swing.*

"Morality without religion is only a kind of dead reckoning — an endeavor to find our place on a cloudy sea by measuring the distance we have to run, but without any observation of the heavenly bodies."—*Longfellow.*

"That may be right which is not pleasant, and that pleasant which is not right; but Christ's religion is both. There is not only peace in the end of religion, but peace in the way."—*Matthew Henry.*

V.

OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY IRRATIONAL.

Those who are upon the very threshold of the kingdom of God are many. Of them it may be truly said, "One thing thou lackest." It is the decisive step, "I will," without which all other preliminary steps are in vain. Nearly all of this class are convinced. They admit everything. In this number many of the first citizens are included — honest, upright, moral men, whose conduct would be becoming to any Christian. These

are they whose loss to the church and the Christian society we can ill afford to sustain. The good man and the influential out of the church will be a better man in the church, whose potentiality for good will be great beyond computation. Of this number also are those stalwart defenders and supporters of our cause, bound to us by such human ties as time cannot sever,— people who love the church because it was the faith of those long gone and whom they loved, and whose godly lives abide in memory sweeter than the incense from a thousand altars. It has ever been one of the most perplexing questions to me, why those individ-

uals who would resent an indignity to the cause of Christianity and who would defend the church with their blood, will not confess Christ before the world and live in the conscious enjoyment of His blessed presence. The change would involve no great sacrifice. Enthroned, their noble selves already rule, controlling every force that enters into their lives. What is it that prevents a full surrender to Christ? Is it the imperious spirit in man refusing to bow the knee even to a mighty King? How foolish! Does not every one know that the day will come when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Christ to the glory of

God the Father"? In that day the mighty shall be brought low, thrones shall crumble, and the "kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ."

Or, maybe, it is the conceit of self-sufficiency — the spirit that makes man a genius or a conquering hero in this world, but a spirit that allures one into hopeless defeat in the soul's life. No sailor has ever undertaken a voyage fraught with such danger as he who launches his frail craft upon life's sea without God. There can be no greater blessing than to feel oneself safe, secure in time of storm. To be protected by an impregnable fortress when a bat-

tle is raging will give one a sense of gratitude never to be forgotten. Gone fear, worry, disquietude, from him who has found refuge in God.

In an effort to solve the problem why good men, men of exemplary lives — barring the noncommittal of themselves to Christ and the church — do not yield all to Him who loves them and thus swell the stream of Christian influence, a number of real difficulties have appeared.

Perhaps the chief thing in the way of the final step in the progress of one toward becoming a child of God, is false notions concerning the progress of conversion and the requirements and privileges of the Chris-

tian life. These false conceptions are natural to a perverted heart, and they have been fostered by teachers who themselves needed to be taught. Happily, the superstitions that have burdened the church as a hideous nightmare from time immemorial are being shaken off, and we are getting back to first principles.

The objectionable elements of our religion have been injected into it by simple, ignorant, or designing men, — "blind leaders of the blind." It is utterly inconceivable that our Lord would so mystify the plan of redemption or permit it to be done in the epistles, that well-meaning people would be confused thereby

and reject it all as an enigma, thus making shipwreck of their faith.

There cannot be in Christianity, in the very nature of a revelation from the Supreme Reason, that which is repulsive to intelligent beings, driving them away from it, as a conglomeration of intangible fables.

The service a Rational God requires of rational men is "a reasonable service." All other requirements are vulgar frauds, with no higher authority for their enforcement than some presumptuous charlatan who fain would sit in "Moses' seat." When these unscrupulous men, or otherwise weaklings, cease to read their opinions into the word

of the Lord, "the whole world will be at rest." We are wont to teach that the way is so plain that "the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein." Is the way plain? Has it ever been plain? Then it has been obscured by incompetent guides. Put away *your* notions and those of the Churchman. Yield your life to God, as you used to throw yourself upon the mercy and love of your Father when you had offended him and lost his smile, and there will come to you such a flood-tide of light as shall leave you in no uncertainty as to the rationality of religious requirements.

But these hallucinations discolor

the new life the child of God is to live, and it becomes univiting to the thoughtful man. The Christian life is ideal, stripped of all false conceptions. It does not mean that one shall be a hermit or a recluse. It includes no denial of the world or the flesh that reason does not dictate. It makes no demand upon any man incompatible with the character of a gentleman. Good-citizenship and an honorable position in society demand that one shall live up to Christian standards. If there is aught in the teaching or practice of any Christian society contrary to reason, you have a right to repudiate it. But mark you, you will find nothing in the life

or teaching of Jesus to chill your blood and merit your unkindly criticism.

Who has not heard men who had "zeal without knowledge" picture the trials and burdens of a Christian life in a way to warn every one who heard him against it? And from such teaching there is an impression abroad that that life which should be smooth and beautiful and serene and joyous, is a synonym of hardness, severity, suffering, without a parallel. It is false — it is a huge deception of the devil.

We hear talk of the poor Christian's burdens, as if the sinner had none to bear. Do not sin and sor-

row, sickness and death, come to us all alike? The difference is that he who has entered into partnership with Christ has One to help him who has said to him, "Cast your cares upon me, for I care for you."

Then it is sometimes said by men who devoutly respect Christianity that they would not hesitate to become Christians, were it not for its unreasonable requirements; such, for instance, as the giving up of the dear and familiar associations and the pleasures in which their very lives consist.

That was a hard saying if literally interpreted: "Ye must hate father and mother, brother and sister,

houses and lands for my sake and the gospel, else you cannot be my disciple." Who could except to it when it is known to mean only that the dearest idol in the world must not stand between God and His child? Give up everything rather than give up God, is what it means to teach.

The one thing to be given up is sin, not friends, not pleasures. The new life will adjust itself to its new environments without friction. You will be expected to live in the same circles, associating with the same people, but you are not to "become partaker of their sins." And for everything you surrender for

Christ's sake, you will have an hundred fold. No one gives up aught for Christ, but Christ gives him something better in its place.

In fact, instead of becoming isolated in the Christian life, one's friends are multiplied. One's friends in the world stand by him, and the whole Church comes to his assistance.

The requirement is simply that one shall renounce the friendships, alliances and pleasures which are hurtful to himself and to society. Is not that rational? The day has passed in which sanctimoniousness and asceticism are legal tender for piety.

Is it not a fact, too, that some hesitate to confess Christ on selfish grounds,— because a consistent Christian's life would mean a change in their business methods that would seem to be subversive of their interest? It has been charged upon religious people that they were in the church for the sake of the good name and influence it gave them, and for the reward offered,— all of which signifies a selfish, sordid motive, unworthy of the unselfish Christ. Without stopping to dignify this charge with any effort at refutation, let the man of the world be questioned as to his motives for remaining out of the church. Perhaps he

would disclaim any motives at all. Then why does he refuse to avail himself of the privileges of the gospel, the only system of teaching which offers him hope for the future?

You will find upon careful examination that men have a motive for continuing in sin, and that the quintessence of it is selfishness. They believe with all their heart that there is more in a life abandoned to the world than the life surrendered to Christ. They see more pleasure in it; they hope to profit financially by it; they see greater popularity with the "gay set." If these are not the reasons, then why deny oneself of

the joy of the religious life? Why sign away one's right and title to the meek's inheritance on earth, and the "joy of the Lord" in the coming kingdom, if there be no consideration?

It is poor logic to stay out of the church because the gospel of the New Testament requires honesty and uprightness. After all, what right has the sinner to do wrong, what license to commit himself to a sinful life, that is denied the disciple of Christ?

A young man said to me recently, "Why, if I should join the church I would have to give up all my sins," — as if being a stranger to God's

grace gave him liberty in vice. He seemed surprised when he was told that his right to do wrong was no greater than my own or that of any other church member.

How many people are breaking the commandments daily, and stultifying their characters, because they are not members of the church!

Be it known that disobedience to God does not release from responsibility. The sinner is under obligation to God, and will be brought to account for every sin.

There are many who would enter the Christian race, but they are afraid they can't hold out. Do not fear; "God is able to keep that

which is committed to Him against that day." If the success of any man's term of service for Christ depended upon his own faithfulness, it would be a failure. In ourselves we are not strong enough to push our way through the enemy's lines. But it is God's faithfulness to us that guarantees ultimate victory. "God is faithful by whom we were called into the fellowship of His son Jesus Christ our Lord." "He is faithful who has called us; He will not suffer our foot to be moved." "He that keepeth us will not slumber." What our Lord said of the apostles, namely, "No man can take

them out of my hands," He says of every follower of His.

Hundreds have said to me, "I fear I can't hold out, and I don't want to reflect on the cause." That spirit is to be commended in one, but there is no danger. You think of your bad habits, what a terrible grip they have upon you, and how you have broken resolutions in the past. In the new life sin does not have dominion — that is where victory comes in easy. You are made a new creature; "old things are passed away," — old lives, old habits, and old tendencies, and "behold, all things are made new." "The things you once loved you will then hate, and the

things you hated you will then love."

You can hold out and run with patience the race set before you, only you must keep your eyes on Christ, the beginner and finisher of your faith. That you could not prove yourself worthy of God's confidence and help is a heresy of the devil. It is absurd to think for a moment that God would fail him who has intrusted his all to Him. Will those who all their lives refused to heed the gospel call stop and consider what must be the result of such obstinacy?

Some day the call will come to you for the last time; then your opportunities will have been irretriev-

ably lost. Then what? If you will not confess Christ here, He will not confess you yonder. Consequently, in the presence of God you must stand *alone* to account for your wasted life. That will be the crucial hour of all your existence. When one gets into business or social trouble, he seeks the best possible counsel to represent him at the bar of court. Christ has promised to be his advocate in the Court of Heaven who is loyal to Him here. It is bad enough to be without Christ in the world. How much worse it will be to be denied His friendship in the great crisis — when the awful words

shall be spoken, "Depart from me; I never knew you."

Christ is the only name given under heaven among men whereby you can be saved. Refuse Him and you are lost forever. He is your greatest need now; He only can avail you when the world slips away from you. "Almost persuaded." That is a great confession for any soul to make. But won't you break down every barrier, and step over the line *now?* You say "yes," but let me wait till to-morrow. The supreme magistrate of Thebes waited one day and lost all. Many a man has waited for a "convenient season" to close in with some splendid

offer, to find that "time and opportunity wait for no man." The result was the loss of fortune or fame.

This matter requireth haste. Why not be sensible in relation to the subject, and make sure your eternal peace? To "seek first the kingdom of God" is God's way, and it is the right way. There is only one way to arrive at calmness which will be permanent; that is to settle this question once and for all. You can't have done with it otherwise. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, to-day is the day of Salvation."

Christ came to solve the vexatious problems of the human soul, and give rest to the weary. He did not

come to brush away every shadow, and hush the thunders and still the tempest forever; but He came to give peace in the midst of storms, to make men brave and courageous and hopeful, howsoever much the sea of life may roar and be troubled. He is the solution of the problem himself. To have possessed Him is to have peace and dignity and calmness, without which a man cannot be a man. How beautiful the life which rests upon Christ! Weary soul, tired, tempted, torn,—tried by adverse conditions,—fly to Him and find rest!

Two artists, it is related, each painted a picture to illustrate his idea of rest. The first chose for his

scene a still, lone lake, far away in the mountains. The other threw upon his canvas a thunderous waterfall, with a fragile tree bending over the foam. In the branches was a robin on her nest, wet with the cataract's spray. The first was stagnation; the last was rest.

Whatever your surroundings may be, you can have the sweet, unbroken rest which God gives to him who commits his way unto the Lord.

EXCUSES WHICH DO NOT EXCUSE.

"We ought to discern the real strength of Christianity and revive the ancient passion for Jesus. It is the distinction of our religion, it is the guarantee of its triumph. Faith may languish, creeds may be changed; churches may be dissolved, society may be shattered. But one cannot imagine the time when Jesus will not be the fair image of perfection, or the circumstances wherein He will not be loved. He can never be superseded; He can never be exceeded. Religions will come and go, the passing shapes of eternal instinct; but Jesus will remain the standard of the conscience and the satisfaction of the heart, whom all men seek, in whom all men will yet meet."—*Ian MacLaren.*

VI.

EXCUSES WHICH DO NOT EXCUSE.

"Then said He unto him, a certain man made a great supper and bade many; and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, *Come*, for all things are now ready."

"And they all with consent began to make excuse."

If drought or flood should come and destroy the fortunes of a community, leaving the people without food, and they should begin to suffer great hunger, and some generous and princely man should provide a

sumptuous feast and invite the famishing to come and eat, do you not think he would be very foolish who would refuse the invitation?

Sin, like a flood-tide pouring through the gates of Eden, has swept over the world, and the Eden of happiness, beauty and plenty has been destroyed in human lives. The soul, hungry and emaciated, has been feeding upon husks, but still is not satisfied. It cries out "like an infant in the night" for sustenance, but the world cannot answer its voices. It cannot assimilate the coarse food of the world. What it gives is not bread to the soul. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" Harken dili-

gently unto me and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live."

Since sin entered the world man has not been contented; he has been as restless and uncertain as a ship set adrift on an ocean without a pilot. His life has been incomplete, and he has sought rest in many lands but found it not. He has lived in luxury only to fill his life with vanity, not contentment. Men try to forget their need of something higher by immersing themselves in the streams of wealth and pleasure and sin. But wherever he is found the voice may be heard crying for living bread.

In the fullness of time a Prince and a Savior came to the world, and He spread a feast, a feast that would thoroughly satisfy and to which He bade many. It was precisely what men had been hungering for, and without which starvation could not be averted. Is it not surprising that they did not hasten to accept the invitation? "But they consented together to make excuse."

No one dare say the invitation was not generous and sufficiently urgent. And it was as broad as human needs. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And so the invitation is given to-day, and it in-

cludes every one who is conscious of his need of something higher and better than has entered into his life hitherto.

Have you been wondering whether you were included in the invitation? If you have a soul-thirst or hunger, if your life seems incomplete, unsatisfied, if surfeited on what the world feeds you,—*you are included.* Christ came to round out human life —to give "life more abundant"— peace, joy, eternal happiness. What He came to do cannot be done by any other. What one can realize in Christ cannot be found elsewhere. Christianity is what a sinful man needs, *and it is all he needs.* In the making of a man, the groundwork and the keystone are Christianity.

It completes the character, beautifies, symmetrizes, strengthens, glorifies. If there be any test of character, whether that character is made strong by Christ will depend its power to stand the test. There are a few small souls who walk through the world without coming in contact with any considerable storms, and so without Christ succeed in keeping their footing. But the man who is "born to rule the storm" and to contribute to the world's peace — then to anchor by-and-by — he it is who is strengthened and sustained by that silent force that speaks the divine presence.

Seeing Christ is man's need and all he needs, is it not altogether unreasonable that he should live with-

out Him, when He freely offers Himself, His life, His influence, to all who come to Him? You have noted that those in the parable who refused to come "made excuses"; they did not give reasons. Can there be any rational ground for refusing Christ's invitation, or even delaying to accept it? Could one hope to be excused for failure to perform duty, especially when its performance meant everything to himself — the happy solution of life's great problem, the preparation of himself for life, whatever may come? Can one satisfy his own conscience under such circumstances?

If the question were put to you plainly, "Why do you not become a Christian?" you would doubtless

reply that you had good reasons for not doing so. If you will stop to consider and analyze your answer, you will find that your "reasons" are only "excuses," unwarranted and silly enough.

Suppose you shall say you are not quite sure of the reality of Christianity, founding your objection upon this ground: it is still clearly your duty to accept Christ upon the terms of the gospel, because reason will tell you that whatever of hope for time and eternity the world has, it is in Him. If you were stranded in deep water and unable to swim, you would welcome the frailest kind of boat as a means of rescue, your reason telling you that although it was unsafe, yet it was better than no

boat. You are adrift on the ocean of life. You cannot steer your own frail craft to safety. Would you not be wise to invite Christ into your life, who spoke to the sea "and there was a great calm"?

The plan of redemption is not irrational, even though it may seem so to you. "Shall your unbelief make the faith of God without effect?"

Many are the excuses the personal worker must meet who urges the claims of Christ upon man. But they all belong to one category — excuses which do not excuse.

Let us take for granted that we are addressing those who are convinced as to their duty and privilege concerning the gospel, and that they are honest with us as we are trying

to be with them. What would be some of the excuses we should likely hear?

The sluggard would say: "I have plenty of time for religion." He is identical with the man who sits on the fence and lazily watches the industrious, successful caravan pass by, and wonders why he is left behind in the race of life. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man who was void of understanding: And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. . . . Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, so shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth and thy want as an armed man." This is a true

picture of him who says he has plenty of time to do his work and folds his hands in sleep. In some one of the old readers is a picture of the sluggard and his premises. His house is dilapidated; the yard is full of weeds; the fence is in ruins. The sluggard himself leans upon the front gate in tattered garments. Such is the life and spiritual environments of the man who, saying he has plenty of time to become a Christian, brings ruin upon himself, and sin clothes him in the rags of unrighteousness.

Suppose you are robust to-day, with the bloom of youth upon your cheek, what assurance have you that you shall breathe the sweet air of another day? To-morrow is not

yours — to-day is yours, and if rightly lived "all things are yours." "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming,' and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites."

Presuming upon the mercy of God and saying in your heart that your Lord has delayed His coming, will result in your eternal ruin. The sin of presumption has wrecked many noble lives. "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me:

then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Every man has sufficient time to prepare for the future, but none to spare.

There are others, who would aver that they were so busy that they had *no time* to devote to religious matters. As if one had time for aught else until that great question were attended to! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." But sinful, avaricious men have reversed the order, and spend the morning and noon of life seeking the world, hoping when their object is accomplished that there will still be time to seek God. To say one has no time for religion, is to say

that one has only time for trifles, and no time for great things. Many think the first thing to do is to make money, to gain reputation, to get ready to live after the fashion of the world. At least, so the trend of their conduct would indicate. It is to the members of that unthinking class that the awful words often come, right in the midst of their most successful efforts to amass fortune: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." "Then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?"

There are others, who will say that they are good enough without a profession of allegiance to Christ. There could be no stronger evidence of one's need of Christ than this

claim. He who was caught up into the third heaven and lived only as *he can live* who has seen Christ, pronounced himself the "chief of sinners." "The least of all Apostles who was not worthy to be called an Apostle." Oh, the consummate conceit of him who says he is good enough without Christ! The world unfortunately contains many such, whom it is not large enough to contain were their size equal to their conceit. After one has done all, he can only say he is "an unprofitable servant." What kind of servant, therefore, should he consider himself who does nothing but throw flowers upon himself and commend his own virtues?

The farther one is from the light,

the less distinct and accurate one's vision. He must be far away from Him indeed, who cannot see in the light of Christ's purity, his own sins and filth and rags.

The Pharisee — and his tribe seem to be on the increase — will tell you that he will have nothing to do with religion, because there are insincere and hypocritical people in the Church,— as though the Church were the only place where such characters can be found. It must be confessed that to all appearances there are those in the church that they may the more successfully carry out their wicked designs — greatest of all compliments to the church; but let us also bear in mind that it has no monopoly upon that class.

The man who will not be a Christian because all Christians do not rise to the ideal, is a poor logician, who if he were to carry his logic into every-day affairs would neither be a husband, a father, a farmer, a carpenter, a citizen, nor a man. He would have simply to vanish into thin air. The wheat and the tares grow together, and will so continue to grow until the Lord of the harvest comes.

But it is one's business to do right if the whole world shall do wrong. And since one is not responsible for the defects of the Christian community, defects that shall burden it until the great day, why should one worry about them as though the

whole weight of the matter were upon his shoulders?

With all its defects, the Church is far in advance of the class to which the complainer belongs. It contains the noblest, bravest, and best of earth's sons and daughters. The backbone of every humanizing as well as Christianizing movement; the warp and woof of every community; the bulwark of every civilization — are those who believe in Christ, and are trying, though in a poor and feeble way, to serve God.

We do not hold before you any man of the kingdom as an ideal worthy of your complete imitation. The best have imperfections that are grievous. We have but one model, a perfect man, God's idea of what a

man ought to be, and man's idea of what a God should be to command universal respect. He is the standard; measure your life by His, not by some miserable, halting, unworthy follower of His.

We must acknowledge that there are many professing Christians who have not the distinguishing marks of Christianity. And, sad to say, the religion of our Lord is depreciated on account of these poor specimens. But it ought not so to be.

There are others, who imagine that it is a sign of weakness, of intellectual littleness, and degeneration, to become a follower of Christ. Vainly puffed up, they profess too much strength to be led and influenced by so unpretentious a class as compose

the heralds of the cross. They take their cue from those defamers of Christianity whose sensational aspersions upon the Church, and animadversions upon everything sacred, give them a kind of national reputation.

Those defamers are spiritual anarchists and iconoclasts, who would destroy God, put out the light of civilization, clip the wings of hope, pluck out the eyes of faith, and shut man up in a prison of darkness.

The willful, malicious falsehoods of opposers of religion notwithstanding, you will find upon the Church roster the intellectual Titans of the ages. Review the list of great and good men in the world to-day — statesmen, scholars, and philanthro-

pists — and you will find that the greatest of them are believers in religion. Then, say it is a sign of weakness to be a Christian? It is a sign of weakness *not* to be a Christian. It is a fool who will not be led. Such men mistake in themselves stubbornness for strength of character. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," and while he walks through the world trying to cover up God's footprints, all sensible men laugh at him.

Tom Paine, who affected to believe that it was a sign of imbecility to follow Christ, said that a century would be sufficient to blot out the last copy of the Bible. The infidel, long since dead and almost forgotten, lives in a few ruined lives as ghosts

inhabit dilapidated buildings, but the Scriptures by the millions of copies each year are being published in nearly all the languages and dialects of earth.

Most of all, perhaps, is to be pitied the man who reverences Christ, believes in Christianity with all his strength, and fully intends to become a Christian, but who thinks he is not quite ready. If one is not prepared to die without Christ, neither is one ready to live without Him. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

Strange as it may seem, the answer comes to the Christian worker very often: "I am not quite ready." Many have closed their eyes upon

the world to open them upon despair, because they were not ready to yield to Christ when the opportunity was most favorable.

A poor peasant sat by an onflowing stream, waiting for the waters to flow by that he might cross to the other side. You are waiting for temptation to flow by, for the stream of worldly pleasure, for love of the world, for certain unholy associations. Wait no longer! As the way to cross the Red Sea and the Jordan was made possible because the people were determined, some way to pass beyond these things that detain you on the side of the world will be made, if you will but set your face toward God and trust to His grace for victory.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE.

"WAIT for the morning, it will come indeed,
Sure as the night hath given need;
Thy eager eyes will strain their sight no longer,
Unanswered by the morning light.
No more vainly strive through tears,
To pierce the darkness of thy doubts and fears;
But, bathed in sunny dews and rays of dawn,
Will smile with rapture over darkness drawn.

"Wait for the morning, O thou smitten child,
Scorned, scourged, persecuted and reviled;
Athirst and famishing, none pitying thee,
Crowned with the twisted thorns of agony,
With no faintest ray of sunlight through the dense
Infinity of gloom to light thee thence;
Wait for the morning,— it will come indeed.
Sure as the night hath given need."

—*James Whitcomb Riley.*

"AFTER the fever of life — after weariness, fightings and despondings, languor and fretfulness, struggling and failing, struggling and succeeding — after all the chances and changes of this troubled and unhealthy state — at length the white throne of God — at length the beatific vision."—*J. H. Newman.*

VII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE.

The Christian has no more of trials than any other man, and he has what others do not have, namely, the assurance of his heavenly Father's favor and approval while on earth, and of surroundings suited to his highest enjoyment in the land beyond the stars. The estate of sons of God, a certain knowledge of which God gives to his children, is a happy one indeed. If you are God's child, you know that He will take care of you, and that by His providence "all things shall work together for good."

Could anything contribute so much to one's happiness as thus to know that the everlasting, ever-loving Father has taken him into His family circle and become personally responsible for his well-being? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." . . . "If sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Such an exalted relation glorifies the heritage of Christians. It endows poverty with riches, it lightens burdens, it soothes pain, it brings a halo to the brow of the sick, it takes away the sting of death, and floods the future with transcendent light.

But with all that Christ does for us here and is to us, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Such a

triumph and glory shall be his who achieves victory over the world as has not entered into the heart of man to conceive. "But we know we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." With this faith and assurance, what does it matter if we must suffer hardness, endure sickness and pass through fiery trials, since "our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"? The crown that awaits the faithful ones upon the performance of their duties, duties which are not grievous if done for the Master, is worth more than all things else.

Here we must necessarily suffer many inconveniences, some of us more than others. It is delightful

occasionally to look away from the darkness of earth to the sunlit climes, and contemplate what God has in store for those who love and serve Him.

"Heavenly joys shall be like the tree of life in the New Jerusalem, which brings forth twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month. Robert Hall used to cry: 'O, for the everlasting rest!' But Wilberforce would sigh to dwell in unbroken love. Hall was a man who suffered; he longed for rest. Wilberforce was a man of amiable spirit, loving society and fellowship; he longed for love. Hall shall have his rest, and Wilberforce his love. There are joys at God's right hand for the spiritual tastes of all those who shall come thither. The heavenly manna tastes to every man's peculiar liking."

After discussing the doctrine of eschatology, or last things, and perhaps looking upon death with some feelings of trepidation, Paul swept the future, and in his vision he saw

the happy throngs of redeemed,—he saw the crowning day of his own life, and as the summer sun melts the clouds every shadow disappeared. He had anticipated the early return of the Lord and had indulged in the hope that he would be caught up in the clouds without passing through the valley of death. But in his enrapt state he reasons: "What if this body must slumber in death, decay and return to its original elements, I shall have a better one, a 'glorious body.'" And there is no halting timidity or uncertainty in his speech. He speaks with the dogmatic assurance of one who knows. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made

with hands, eternal in the heavens." Here is assurance for all times. This conscious knowledge enabled the apostle to bequeath to the world a hero's life of faith and trust which astonishes and charms us.

Suppose the house in which we live and love and suffer here is insecure and unable to stand many storms: we are going to have a better one when it falls. Some young friends who had recently gone to housekeeping in a poor, squalid house said to me: "We are here only temporarily. After a while we are going to have a fine, large mansion with many doors and windows, and it shall be handsomely furnished." The first house was uncomfortable in the extreme, but they endured it be-

cause they hoped to have a better one. Many of God's children are forced to occupy frail bodies which are racked with pain and a prey to disease and constant sickness. What a comfort to know that the house God has fitted up for those thus unfortunate here is one in which they shall have unbroken pleasure!

A sick friend said to me: "This house of mine has been a frail one through the years. It has never kept me comfortable, still I have loved it and I am loth to give it up. But, sir, I have a better one, one that the storms of life cannot wreck, and in it I shall be happy and secure forevermore."

One of the brightest, sweetest Christians it has been my pleasure

to know, is a woman who has been an invalid, confined to her bed for twenty-five years! She suffers untold agonies all the time, yet she never complains. Her room is lit up with a strange light, and her friends delight to visit her because there is so much of good cheer in her presence. Her house has ever been uncomely and poor. Day by day she has watched it decay, and without a shudder she has seen the clay crumbling from over her head. Weather-beaten, the wild winds have whistled through, and aches and pains have been her daily companions. And she groans in spirit, desiring to be clothed upon with that heavenly house, the glorious body that shall never know pain. This child of God

lives upon the mount of transfiguration, and she is ever singing the songs of victory.

In a graceful cottonwood tree in our front yard a mocking-bird has kindly made his home. He moved his prima donna there before the ides of March. The spring has been cold, rainy, dreary, but our neighbors have given us a daily concert. During the month of May, the sun hid its face for a whole week and it rained almost incessantly, but there was music in the tree-top every day. The floods arose and the people were terrified, and destruction of life and property brought mourning to them; but still my orchestra sang. One day the heavens were black as night, the storm raged, the waters

roared with the swelling thereof, trees were bent almost to the ground by the giant arm of the storm, and the rain fell in blinding sheets. There was a lull in the battle of the elements — my sweetheart was singing. It is now the ides of June. The morning is ideal — from across the lawn come the sweet strains of ever-varying song whose heavenly harmonies fill my soul with delight. The air is full of music and redolent with the perfume of a thousand flowers; the sweet-scented honeysuckle is wafting its perfumed breath to me through the open window. One might easily imagine oneself in the far-away East, standing in the open gate of fair far-famed Eden. There is no wonder that the birds sing to-

day, but they sing also in the storm. They sing after the curtain of night has fallen. Only last night I was awakened from a sad dream to hear my cheerful neighbor singing his glad song. The little home is robbed by some winged thief. There is sorrow for a night, but the matin song rings out clear and joyous. The unthoughtful boy with arrow pierces the wing of the singer, but he does not rob him of his sweetness. He sings and forgets his pain.

What a blessing to himself and to the world is the happy, light-hearted Christian! And why should we not be happy? Ours is the assurance of faith. We know that our Father will feed and clothe us, that he will give us grace and glory, and "with-

hold no good thing from us," — for we are of more value than many sparrows, not one of which falls to the ground without His seeing it.

A friend of mine in the southern part of Kansas was joined to the bride of his heart. He owned a farm on which was a two-roomed cabin. He said to her in whom his soul delighted, "Now I haven't the means to build a suitable home for you, and it would be unwise to mortgage the farm. Let us occupy the little house and try to be happy, and sometime we shall be able to build a handsome one." He was frugal and industrious, but twenty years had gone by before he was able to build, and eight children had come to crowd the walls of their little home. One day

he conducted me through the new house, one of the finest country residences in the State, and as we went from room to room he told me of their struggles, how uncomfortable they had been, how they had suffered, and with what pleasure they had looked forward to the new home. I thought of these tenements of clay in which we live, how poorly we get along in them, and then an apocalyptic vision of the mansion in the sweet by-and-by came to me, and it was glorious to behold.

Let us not complain of our lot here, whatever it may be. Heaven will reward us a thousand times over for what we endure in the land of shadows. And we shall appreciate the mansion so much the more, be-

cause we have occupied the hovel. And there shall be no more sorrow, sickness, or death, and God shall wipe every tear from our eyes.

But not only does it comfort us to know that we shall be better off when these bodies are laid down, but we have the assurance that our loved ones and friends who have been called hence have entered upon an inheritance grand and beautiful.

The world is full of change and decay. Happy families are broken up, and their members are scattered to the four corners of earth. When they depart for their new homes, maybe across the seas, although they are to live in kings' palaces and to have every luxury, yet the pain at parting is very great. And there are

heartaches and pains and sleepless nights. We cannot but sorrow when those dear to us fold their tents and set sail over unknown seas, to the "undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns," yet we mourn not "as those who have no hope." We know that we shall see them again where the sun forever shines, the flowers forever bloom, and pleasures have no end.

Years ago, a mother awoke one night to find the roof of the new home burning over her head. The father was not there that night, and there was barely time to awaken the children and get them out before the building fell. The next morning the mother took the little ones into a log cabin in the field temporarily. It

was a great trial. It is not thus when the "earthly houses" of our friends are burned up by raging fevers. Thank God, they go into better houses, houses made without hands, "eternal in the heavens."

Life would be worse than a failure but for the glorious future to which earth's pilgrims can look forward through their gloom and tears. There are not many of us but whose troubles outnumber our pleasures. But the cares, burdens and sorrows here endure but for a season, while the blessedness of the life beyond is eternal. Beautiful hope! Blessed assurance! The day is dawning when faith shall be lost in sight, and hope swallowed up in victory, and when God's children shall be caught

up in the air, ever to be with the Lord.

"Ye needna think it 's no' for you,
An' syne ye 'll lea' 't alane;
He bocht an entrance wi' His bluid —
An' ye 're a' welcome hame.
Ye needna hanker on the road;
If sae, He 's nae tae blame;
'Come unto Me,' He says to a'—
For ye 're a' welcome hame.

"The beggar man wi' tattered claes,
The queen wi' silken train,
Wha pleads the merits o' His bluid
Will ha'e a welcome hame.
The rich, the puir, the young, the auld,
To Jesus are the same;
'Come unto Me,' He says to a' —
For ye 're a' welcome hame.

"Ahint the clouds the sun is bricht,
An' whiles oor hearts are fain
To lea' the struggles o' this warl'
An' flee to yon bricht hame.
The mansions o' the blest are there;
Wi' herts a' free frae pain,
We 'll gang when His guid time comes roon —
For we 're a' welcome hame.

"We 'll meet wi' frien's we kent lang syne,
Wha frae oor herts were ta'en;
They couldna bide, for Jesus ca'ed
Them up to His ain hame.
We 'll meet them, an' we 'll welcome be
Where Jesus is to reign;
We 'll gang when His guid time comes
roon —
For we 're a' welcome hame."

THE END.

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